How to Fit a Vellum To Your Banjo

Any banjoist can re-head his instrument if certain elementary rules are carried out and reasonable precautions taken. The larger the vellum, the easier it is to fit, but three inches larger than the vellum-wire is ample.

It must be emphasised that the Clifford Essex Co. cannot make any allowance on vellums that split after fitting. Every vellum supplied by us is personally selected by Mr. A. P. Sharpe and, if properly fitted, will give good service.

INSTRUCTIONS

THE first thing to do is to strip the instrument—and you might find this a good opportunity to thoroughly clean all plated parts and remove all dust and dirt from inside the hoop.

When the hoop is ready to receive the new vellum, soak the unstretched skin in clean cold water until it is soft and can be rolled. (About five to ten minutes should prove sufficient). Then lay the wet skin flat on a soft clean towel or cloth and roll it up so that the towel or cloth absorbs all superfluous moisture.

Then lay the skin (face side up i.e., with the name stamp underneath) on the spread-out towel or cloth, seeing there are no wrinkles in evidence. Place the vellum-wire on the vellum (leaving an even surplus all round) and start to fold the vellum outside the wire over the wire; placing the top-band (or bezel) in position as you go to hold it. Then lift the vellum and top-band together and place on the banjo hoop.

Gently ease into place and then fit six tension bolts in position—one each side of the tailpiece; one each side of the handle; and one in the centre of each side of the hoop. Now that the vellum and top-band are held in their proper position, gently ease the vellum up under the top-band; seeing that no folds or wrinkles are in evidence where the vellum goes under the top-band. Then slightly press down in the centre of the vellum to allow a little "play" for subsequent tightening. Now slightly tighten each tension bolt; seeing that the top-band goes down evenly all round the hoop.

After re-checking to see that no folds or wrinkles have appeared in the vellum under the top-band, tighten the tension bolts so that the vellum is evenly stretched across the hoop. (The top-band should be a little higher on the hoop than it will be when the banjo is later assembled).

Lay aside in a cool dry place for not less than 24 hours. If it can be left longer, so much the better. IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD ARTIFICIAL HEAT BE APPLIED.

When the vellum is thoroughly dry—and here it should be emphasised that the exposed part of the vellum will dry quickly but the part under the top-band will take considerably longer—undo the tension bolts and remove the vellum from the hoop. (If there are any signs of "stickiness" when removing the vellum it indicates dampness and the vellum should be put on one side to allow for further drying). Trim off the surplus skin and sprinke a little french chalk on the flange formed by the hoop.

Replace the vellum on the banjo hoop and fit all the tension brackets and nuts—taking great care to apply tension evenly all round the hoop. IF TENSION IS APPLIED TO THE VELLUM WHILST THERE ARE ANY SIGNS OF DAMPNESS THE SKIN WILL SPLIT.

The correct tension of a vellum to give best results is for it to be as "tight as a board;" just "giving" to hard pressure of the thumb. After a new vellum is fitted it will stretch slightly for a few days. Proper tension can be maintained by a slight turn on each tension bolt for a few days.

The Best Vellums are still obtainable from

Clifford Essex Music Co. Ltd.

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